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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000134

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PL](#)

SUBJECT: CIVIC PLATFORM AND LAW AND JUSTICE INSIDERS SEE
EARLY ELECTIONS AS INCREASINGLY LIKELY

REF: WARSAW 111 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Victor Ashe for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: In separate meetings Law and Justice (PiS) and Civic Platform (PO) leaders and insiders told Ambassador and Poloffs that early elections are increasingly likely, despite the Sejm's passage of the budget January 24. After a late night January 26 Sejm session in which PiS once again joined with extremist Self Defense (SO) and League of Polish Families (LPR) parties to pass key legislation, PO leaders predicted and PiS insiders acknowledged that elections might be announced next week. PO leaders say there is little appetite for such elections among wary PiS deputies, and say it is a big gamble for the Kaczynski's. End Summary.

2. (C) In a January 26 Sejm session that lasted until the wee hours, PiS's legislative partners Self Defense (SO) and the League of Polish Families (LPR) supported PiS's candidate for Human Rights Ombudsman and PiS's priority legislation to delay elections for the high profile post of Warsaw mayor (which President Kaczynski held and which PO's Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz is heavily favored to win), in exchange for PiS support for SO and LPR candidates to the National Radio and Television Council (KRRiT). The deal was heavily criticized by PO, which accuses PiS of trying to control the media and of manipulating the election calendar for political reasons, and virtually (but not completely) ends any chance of a PO-PiS coalition absent new elections.

3. (C) When Ambassador Ashe, accompanied by NSC Senior Director Damon Wilson, met PO leaders Donald Tusk, Jan Rokita, and Gronkiewicz-Waltz for breakfast January 26 (i.e., before the late night Sejm session), they said they thought early elections remained the likeliest option, but only slightly, and were quick to add that anything was possible. Tusk said that a coalition between PO and Law and Justice (PiS) remained "theoretically possible," but predicted that discussions in the next several days between the parties would make or break the deal. Rokita said that political trust was the missing ingredient necessary for reaching a coalition deal, both now and when the initial coalition talks broke down. To mend that trust, both Rokita and Tusk said that PiS party chief, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, would have to be a member of any future coalition government, either as Prime Minister or in some other position that would make him accountable to the public, and not allow him to operate behind the scenes as he does now.

4. (C) The late night Sejm session seemed to have convinced both PiS and PO leaders and insiders that early elections are more and more likely. Tusk publicly announced that he thought the Kaczynski's had already decided to go forward with elections, and that he believed they had even set the date of March 26. Tusk confidant Slawomir Nowak told us January 27 that the results of the previous night's Sejm session convinced PO that elections were coming. When Ambassador and Poloff breakfasted with PiS media wizards Adam Bielan and Michal Kaminski January 27, they said they thought the President would make a decision the first week of February, and all but confirmed that they were gearing up for a possible campaign. Ironically, the decision could be made even though the budget is close to being passed.

5. (C) Rokita and the other PO leaders told us there was no enthusiasm among PiS caucus members for either early elections nor for a PiS alliance (the so-called "Stability Pact") with SO in particular. Rokita and, separately, Nowak said many PiS Deputies--almost all of whom were elected for the first time last year--fear losing their seats and possibly even their spots on electoral lists. Rokita said he was not sure even President Kaczynski would want to take the gamble. Noting a recent poll, Gronkiewicz-Waltz said that the left would surely do better in a new round of elections, particularly if the Alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD) and the Social Democrats (SdPL) joined forces. She added that if the Kaczynskis take the gamble and fail to gain a majority or something close to it, then they will be significantly weakened. If elections have a result similar to the last ones, with PiS having to cobble together some kind of coalition or being forced again to go forward with a minority government, the party as a whole will lose.

6. (C) Left unsaid by PO leaders was that PO might gain in

such a situation. Speaking to us separately, PO insider Nowak said that a PO-PiS coalition might once again be possible after new elections. Rokita and the others also dismissed PiS's proposed "Stabilization Pact" with SO, LPR and the Polish Peasants Party (PSL) as "political theater." He said that there was significant discord within the PiS caucus to a partnership with SO, in particular, with which PiS has some significant ideological differences, and little likelihood that PiS would go into a formal coalition with SO.

17. (C) Comment: Although insiders are now saying the likelihood of elections is greater, no one believes that anything is set in stone. PO's Gronkiewicz-Waltz commented to PolCouns that the Kaczynski brothers like to "fight and kick up the dust," but don't like the day to day running of government, arguing that the current "crisis" reflected their political style more than any real governance crisis in Poland. New polls show PO gaining (and one even has them leading) in any new elections, which could give the Kaczynskis pause, but if they decide to go forward with elections, we may know by the end of next week. Bielan and Kaminski both said that they do not have confidence in the polls, saying they underrepresent support for PiS because they do not include the millions of Poles who still live without telephones in their homes. According to the PiS insiders this group can be counted on to support PiS again, as they did last fall. End Comment.

ASHE